WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY—Founded December 19, 1857 APRIL 1976

WASHTENAW IMPRESSIONS

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Our participation in the Zonta Sale proved to be a profitable undertaking for the society. Volunteers from WCHS helped man or person booths during the three day sale, March 25-27. Zonta contributed $2.20 to our museum fund for each hour WCHS volunteers worked. A total of $59.40 was earned.

In addition, Zonta gave us the books and paperbacks which were left after the sale and a dozen or so wine making kits. There were approximately 150 books which will be included in our Katherine Groomes Memorial Plant and Book Sale next fall.

On behalf of the society, I would like to thank Ethelyn Morton, Dorothy Ouradnik, Esther Warzynski, Helen Schmutz, Dorothy Purdy, Hazel Proctor, Mary Steffek and Stuart Thayer who contributed to the success of this effort.

And our thanks to Zonta. It is interesting to note that a number of Zonta members are also members of the WCHS.

We hope you are all snipping, slipping and propagating for our green plant sale next fall. You have my full backing and approval to snip, slip and propagate whenever and wherever you may find a green plant. We will need lots of plants next fall.

Oh, about the wine kits. We thought they would be a hot item among the students during the fall sale.

Thomas F. Lacy

★★★ WCHS DESTINATION GANDY DANCER SUNDAY, APRIL 25; SAM BRECK CONDUCTOR OF GREAT LAKES DEPOTS TOUR ★

It's all aboard for the Gandy Dancer in April when Sam Breck of the Ann Arbor Train and Trolley Watchers Society will show the Washtenaw County Historical Society "A Last (?) Look at the Railroad Depot".

The special meeting will be at 1:30 p.m. Sunday, April 25, in the lounge area of the Gandy Dancer Restaurant, formerly the Michigan Central Depot.

Breck, marketing director of Ann Arbor Bank who has had a lifelong love affair with railroads, plans to show various types of railroad stations in the Great Lakes area including some long-gone ones in Washtenaw County. He also plans to show some adaptive uses of depots--"some good and some outrageous". He has a collection of 2,500 slides.

He is editor of "The Inside Track", a bi-monthly publication on railroad history in southeast Michigan. It is the only such publication in the state. He is also a member of the Railroad Station Historical Society, headquartered in Crete, Neb.

★★PLEASE NOTE: THE MEETING IS AT 1:30 P. M. SUNDAY, APRIL 25.

HSM SOUTHEAST REGION CONFERENCE MAY 22 IN DEXTER; A SESSION AT WEBSTER CHURCH, MUSEUM TOUR PLANNED

"Planning and Implementing a Major Restoration Project" will be the theme of the Southeast Region Historical Conference Saturday, May 22, in Dexter.

Speakers from the Cobblestone Farm Association of Ann Arbor and Dexter Historical Society will discuss their restoration projects. The day-long meeting will include a tour of the Dexter museum and afternoon session at the historic Webster Church.

The conference is sponsored by the Historical Society of Michigan, Sue Cutler of the HSM staff Registration information is being mailed to local historical societies which are encouraged to make group registrations. However, it is open to all interested individuals. For more information telephone Sue Cutler, conference coordinator, at 769-1828.

MEETINGS TO FOCUS ON REVOLUTIONARY ANCESTORS, MAPS

The Washtenaw Genealogical Society, a section of WCHS, will turn its attention to Revolutionary ancestors and maps during the next two months.

Mrs. Arthur Smith will discuss "Tracing Your Revolutionary Ancestor" at the April meeting. It will be at 2:30 p.m. Sunday, April 25, at the Senior Citizens Guild, 502 W. Huron St., Ann Arbor

Next month the group will gather in the map room of the University of Michigan's Graduate Library at 2:30 p.m. Sunday, May 23. The map room is on the eighth level of the stacks.

Members will be available before each meeting from 1 p.m. on to help individuals with their genealogical problems.

IN DOWNTOWN ANN ARBOR

OLD BUILDINGS RESTORED FOR NEW USES

Wystan Stevens, Ann Arbor's historian in residence and roving photographer, conducted a slide tour of some historic downtown Ann Arbor buildings which have recently undergone change at the March WCHS meeting.

He led off with the fire which destroyed the Old German restaurant on April 1, 1975. The fire was discovered about 6 a.m. and Stevens was on the scene much of the day photographing it from all angles.

Besides street scenes with firemen and a Detroit television cameraman, he had dramatic shots of flames and fire hoses shooting water high into the air (to overcome the wind), the Ashley St. side-entrance sign of the restaurant enveloped in smoke and of a hole burned in the roof. He shot the roof scenes from the 10th (top) floor of the First National Building.

The facade of the restaurant building with its row of windows across the upper story is typical of the Chicago school of architecture, which was seeking new ways to let light into buildings, he noted. It is now being rebuilt but probably not as it originally was, he added.

The restaurant building was a T-shape, facing Washington St. but with an ell at back toward Ashley St. and an opposite ell toward an alley. It had been built by the Staeblers.

Next on tour were the Haller House and Nixon or Laubengayer houses at 410 and 416 S. Main St. respectively. The Haller house with its juttings, turnings, turrets and millings is an example of the so-called Queen Anne style of architecture which flourished about 1885-1900, he said.

The two carriage houses are gone but a cone-shaped turret with finial is still there, as is a second-floor dust porch at back. Housewives used to shake their dust mops over the railing of such porches.

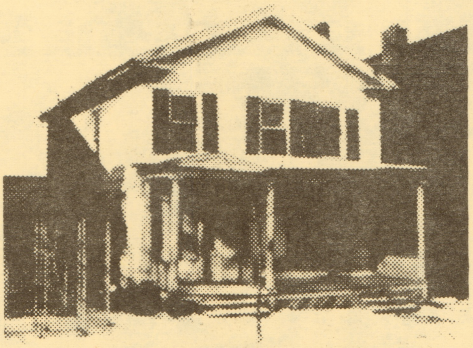
The Haller house is now owned by Bonnie DeLoof, a realtor, and has been painted and converted to office use while retaining the interior woodwork, terra cotta fireplace, and the fancy old door handles. There is a wooden stairs, a narrow corridor and a servant stairs at back.

The restoration would have been a little more authentic if the exterior window woodwork had been accented in a darker color, he noted.

On North Fifth Ave. just behind the Armory there used to be a house dating back to the 1830's which was once the home of Edward Mundy, the first Lieutenant Governor of Michigan who served with Stevens T. Mason, "the boy governor".

Stevens happened along last Sept. 22 in time to photograph the wreckage of the demolished house as it was being cleared away for a parking lot.

The young man from the wrecking company, who has a master's degree in fine arts and was originally a sculptor, Stevens found out, rescued some hand-hewn beams and showed him the careful mortise and tenon joining and pegs used in the construction.



Mundy House

Dated from 1830's. Demolished Sept. 22, 1975 for parking lot.

The Mundy house had not been well maintained over the years, he noted.

Exterior work on The National Bank and Trust Co. at Main and Washington Sts. was shown next. It was the State Savings Bank when it was built in 1908. A covering put on in the late 1950's is being removed and a new covering of glass panels is being installed.

The project which began last May required an elaborate scaffold to remove the old panels, drill in anchor points for the new panels and erect and paint a new framework for the new panels which cost $400 each, he said. As the workmen uncovered some of the original brick, the old name of the bank could be seen.

Stevens also caught a playful scene of workmen swinging at the site on a suspended ball high in the air at sunset.

Architect David Osler planned the new covering to make the building visually recede and reflect its surroundings. It will reflect two of the most handsome buildings in downtown, Stevens noted, the B. E. Muehlig Drygoods Store and the First National Building which he called a fine example of 1920 Collegiate Gothic. . . .

PLAN MISSISSIPPI CRUISE

Have you always wanted to ride a riverboat down the Mississippi to New Orleans a la Mark Twain?

If so, the Historical Society of Michigan plans to give you a chance for such a trip on the Delta Queen in spring 1977. They are already making arrangements because the popular trip has to be booked well ahead.

Editor: Alice Ziegler, 663-9926
Keylining: Anna Thorsch and Dorothy Wood
Printing and typesetting: Courtesy of Ann Arbor Federal Savings & Loan and Drury, Lacy, Inc.

The Heinrich Building at 111 S. Fourth Ave. has one of the few remaining cornices in Ann Arbor atop it, he continued, as well as Italianate rounded brackets. After a falling cornice almost injured a woman pedestrian, City Council passed a cornice ordinance and some were removed.

The building recently occupied by an aluminum window business and the Knights of Pythias upstairs is being restored by its present owner, Peter DeLoof, who now has law offices there.

In the 1860's it was a saloon and may have been handy for thirsty guests at Solon Cook's Temperance Hotel right across the street, Stevens joked.

DeLoof found the old basement stairs notched by the many kegs of beer rolled down them. The old stairs now hang on the wall in the reception area of his office. New stairs made of a beam with cross pieces as steps have been installed. Old brick has been exposed and stone glazed with a plastic coating. A fragment of bone was found in concrete in the basement, Stevens noted.

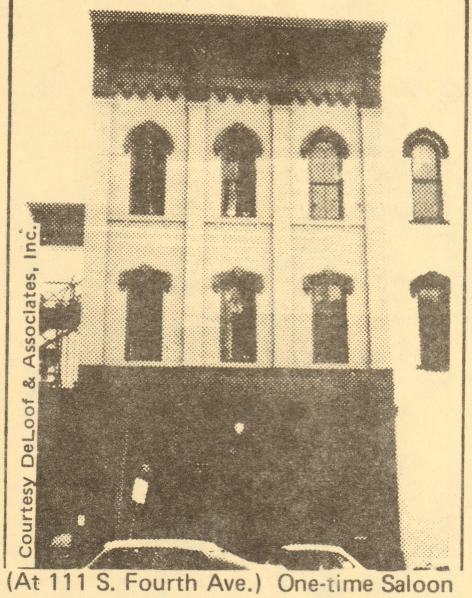
Upstairs Stevens found ornate high-backed chairs and other furniture and minute books the Pythians had left behind. He sent the books to the U-M's Bentley Historical Library. A long settee is now at the Old Town Tavern, he added. DeLoof plans two split-level apartments on the upper floors.

Mr. Flood's Party (tavern) at 120 W. Liberty St. features an 1860's era metal ceiling and Tiffany-type lamps inside. Owner Ned Duke had the paint chemically removed from the brick exterior and it was carefully cleaned, not sandblasted, to retain the original brick surface.

The entrance was re-done with a fancy undulating wood valance above it and the steps flanked by 19th century bannisters.

Both the county and city governments have indicated an interest in the old downtown post office when the Federal Government moves to the new Federal Building under construction, Stevens said.

HEINRICH BUILDING



(At 111 S. Fourth Ave.) One-time Saloon now restored for law offices, apartments upstairs.

Calling it a handsome building, he showed close-ups of its exterior decorative embellishments and an old desk and light fixtures inside. It apparently had had both gas and electric lights.

Commenting on the frequent stealing of post office pens, Stevens suggested they should leave off the name "U. S. Government". The Michigan Union found that the only way to prevent rapid disappearance of its napkins and silverware was to leave the name off, he said. Before that many student rooms were furnished with such Michigan Union items.

Close-up of Facade

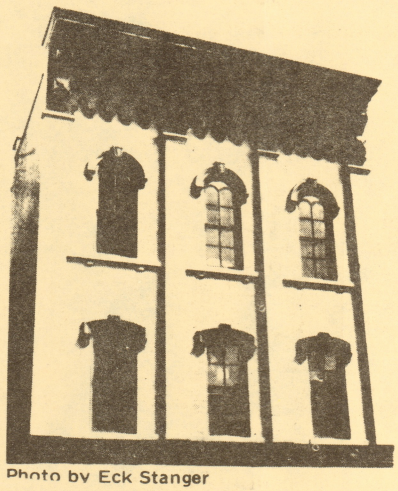


Photo by Eck Stanger

Note bracketed cornice, one of few remaining in Ann Arbor.

The Haarer Building at 113 W. Liberty St. has been rescued from destruction, he noted. The city had bought it for parking along with Rider's and the old Walker Buggy Factory, more recently Sear's Catalogue Order Store.

The Haarer Building, used as headquarters for Ann Arbor's Sequicentennial in 1974, has been sold to private owners, Joe and Carolyn Arcure. It has been declared an historic building and may be placed on the National Register of Historic Places. Rider's Hobby Shop Inc. has bought the building they occupy next door and the Ann Arbor Art Association has bought the Walker building and restoration is in progress.

The Sesquicentennial sign from the Haarer Building is now at the Fleetwood Diner on Ashley St., he noted, while the old tables are in John Hathaway's old Second Ward Public Building and Mrs. Demaris Cash has the old washing machine that was in the window.

The Arcure's restoration and remodeling of the building is in line with current thinking on restoration of old buildings--that the exteriors be preserved as much as possible as they originally were while permitting interior remodeling to suit current needs and uses and thus make restoration economically feasible.

The West Side Book Shop opened on the main floor last fall while the Arcure's are remodeling the two upstairs floors for living quarters.

A new firewall has been installed. John Copley of nearby Crow Quill Graphics designed the bookstore sign in keeping with the historic exterior.

Interestingly, Haarers originally had a bookstore there 70 years ago and Arcure found on the third

floor a case sent to Haarer's from Chicago.

Stevens had pictures of a third floor room whose walls were papered with 1899 magazine covers and clippings and actresses pictures. Unfortunately there was no way it could be saved as the pictures were glued directly to decaying plaster, he said. There was also a gas light fixture and under the rug some 1906 Ann Arbor newspapers, some in German-language editions. (In close-up the horsehair used in the old plaster could be seen along the broken edges.)

The Arcures removed part of the floor between the second and third floors to create an atrium. They spent much of last summer and fall removing the overlay of paint and stain from woodwork. New plaster has been installed and door knobs newly plated.

On the outside they plan to highlight the figures "1888" in the topmost arch of the facade with gold leaf. The shutters for the building which were auctioned off were rescued by Kingsbury Marzolf who bought them and sold them back to the Arcures at cost.

The final stop on the picture tour was the former Michigan Central Depot, now the Gandy Dancer Restaurant, built in 1886. It was designed by Frederick H. Spier of Detroit in the Romanesque revival style started by the eccentric Boston architect, Henry Hobson Richardson. Newspapers hailed it as the finest depot between Buffalo and Chicago.

(Spier and his partner, William C. Rohns, both Prussian immigrants, designed other local buildings including Newberry Hall which is now Kelsey Museum, St. Thomas Church and the Eberbach Building. The latter, their last work in Ann Arbor built in 1906, was the first reinforced concrete building here, Stevens said.)

Michigan Historical Collections, U-M Bentley Library

Edward Mundy

First Lt. Governor of Michigan, who lived in house on N. Fifth Avenue (shown on page 2) in 1830's and 40's. Detail from broadside political cartoon. Only known likeness according to Stevens.

A slide from a 1900 postcard scene of the depot showed horse-drawn cabs along the street side of the depot. Another picture showed a derailment there on September 19, 1940. Recent pictures inside and out showed the depot as it is today.

The dining room features some of the original benches still used for seating. There are stained glass windows and "sleepy eye" windows in the dormers, he pointed out. (There are other "sleepy eye" windows in some homes around Ann Arbor, he added.)

He also showed the baggage room with its handsome wooden ceiling which the present owner Chuck Muer wants to use for addition dining space. He also wants to fill in under the canopy between the depot and the baggage house for more kitchen space. After heated controversy, the proposal has been approved by City Council.

HOW ANN ARBOR GOT A STRANGE NEW TREE—THE CATALPA

Cornelia Corselius, in her paper on "Some Early Homes of Ann Arbor, Michigan" written in 1909 tells us how Ann Arbor got a strange new tree-the catalpa.

"Mrs. (Volney) Chapin's flower garden was the admiration of all, with its large variety of roses and other old-fashioned flowers. The old catalpa trees standing in front of the house were the first in the city" she wrote.

"Mrs. Chapin heard that a farmer in Ypsilanti township had a number of strange trees growing on his farm. She and her son Charles drove to this farm house and got three young trees. A few years previous a family of emigrants from South Carolina stopped with the farmer overnight and left him a seed pod. He planted the seeds not knowing what they were and it was several years before the name of the tree was known."

The Chapins, who once owned an Ann Arbor foundry and manufactured plows, stoves and mill machinery, lived on the northeast corner of Ann St. and Fourth Ave. where the Peter's Hotel and Wooden Spoon Books now are, Stuart Thayer, curator of WCHS collections, tells us.

Sometime after the Chapins lived there and up until Prohibition, it was called "The Catalpa Inn", no doubt from Mrs. Chapin's trees, but it was better known as "Joe's", immortalized in the U-M student song:

"I want to go back to
Michigan, To dear
Ann Arbor town,
Back to Joe's and
the Orient..."

Joe was Joe Parker. Incidentally "the Orient" was on Main St. across from the Court House, Thayer says. The building and cafe in it took their name from the Orient Lodge of Masons who met there on the third floor in the 1840's according to Harrison Caswell's history of Ann Arbor Masonic Lodges, Thayer said.

Papers by Cornelia Corselius and Harrison H. Caswell are in the Michigan Historical Collections, Bentley Library, U-M.

PROF. RUSSELL E. BIDLACK (BIDLAKE) GIVES TIPS TO BOOST FAMILY TREE CLIMBERS ON THEIR WAY

By Alloa Anderson

Prof. Russell E. Bidlack, U-M dean of library science, presented many important reference points on "Climbing Your Family Tree" at the March Genealogical Section meeting.

Prof. Bidlack, a descendant of John Allen, is the author of "John Allen and the Founding of Ann Arbor", Michigan Historical Collections Bulletin No. 12, December 1962.

Searching for genealogical records on any person often turns up, variations in spelling such as "Bidlack", "Bidlake" etc., he noted.

The first known American Family history was that of an S. Stebbins family, published in 1771, he said. Since then, many events have caused other Americans to be curious about ancestors, but surges of interest have come at times of wars when membership in well-known patriotic societies became a popular goal.

Also the desire to know from whence we came, whether we have American Indian ancestors, more about a recently deceased patriarch of the family or other family traditions are reason enough to send one searching.

At this point, Prof. Bidlack explained the kinds of genealogical source materials:

Non-printed materials such as family Bibles and letters, wills and administrations, deeds and all land records, marriage, birth and tax records, registration of cattle and hog marks (yes, really!), census rolls, and pension files. Others are old newspapers, publications for those interested in a particular name of a large family, general genealogical and history publications such as "Genealogical Helper" and "Tri-State Trader", queries in these and certain newspapers such as "The Hartford Times" and correspondence with others of the family interested in its genealogy. In that case be sure to send self-addressed stamped envelopes, he said.

Other types of materials found in libraries such as the Burton Historical Library in Detroit are family genealogies such as the classic "Dawes-Gates Genealogy", family magazines and books about families of a particular area such as "Early Friends Families of Bucks County, Pa." by Clarence V. Roberts, 1925, republished 1975. (Prof. Bidlack presented the society with a gift copy of that.)

Still other sources are county histories, county portrait books or "mug books", serial publications as of the Detroit Society for Genealogical Research and Everton Publishers of Salt Lake City, Utah, and the Index of Revolutionary Pension Applications.

Some problems can be solved by knowledge of the socio-economic times in which the people lived, he said.

For example, as population grew, counties were subdivided and names changed so that one man's land and census records might change locations while he still lived in the same house on the same farm.

Particular laws might affect the removal of a family. Prof. Bidlack said when a law outlawing slave-holding in Fayette County, Pennsylvania, was passed in 1782, his ancestors took their slaves across the state line to Estelle County, Kentucky. One needs to look around the area when families seem to disappear, he said.

When all possible data have been collected, then it may be published. The need for a scholarly approach and accuracy is always present, he said.

BICENTENNIAL TOPIC PLANNED

The WCHS meeting in May on a Bicentennial theme will be at 8 p.m. Thursday, May 20, in Liberty Hall at Ann Arbor Federal Savings and Loan, Liberty at Division Sts., Ann Arbor. "Impressions" Editor Alice Ziegler will speak on "Washtenaw's Revolutionary Heroes."

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COUNTY CALENDAR

Chelsea Area Historical Society--The house tour has been changed from May 20 to Saturday, May 22, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. It will feature the McKune Memorial Library and seven houses dating from 1850 to 1940. One of the homes is a centennial farm and most have some antique furnishings. Lunch will be served at the North Lake Methodist Church. Tickets for the house tour may be bought on the tour but lunch tickets must be bought at least a day ahead. Tickets will be on sale at Chelsea Drug and McLeod's Drug Store in Dexter.

Chelsea--Chelsea will kick-off its Bicentennial celebration with two dances Friday, May 7. The "Hot Lucy" band will play at the high school from 8 to midnight for teens and young adults. The "over 18's" will dance to "The Researchers" from 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. at the fairgrounds. Admission is $1.75 per person for teens and $4 per person for adults. Proceeds will be used for later Bicentennial events.

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Manchester--A bicentennial happening is planned Saturday and Sunday, April 24 and 25, at Manchester High School featuring a wide variety of old-fashioned activities from a quilting bee and a taffy pull to an old photograph studio and a bootblack. There will be minuet lessons, silent movies, and a display of Indian relics from local collectors. They are even trying to keep prices old fashioned--a nickel for most everything except food which will be at cost. It's all happening from 5-9 p.m. Saturday and 2-6 p.m. Sunday.

Manchester also has a Bicentennial Country Store downtown which is to be open through the summer of '76. Manchester residents are bringing prized family keepsakes out of the attic to furnish it as realistically as possible. It is open three days a week, 9:30-5 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays and 9:30 to noon Saturdays. It's next to the doughnut shop and decorated in red, white and blue so you can't miss it, Debbie Gilbert, publicity chairman, says.

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Milan Historical Society--7:30 p.m. third Wednesday of month at Milan Community House.

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Salem Historical Society--7:30 p.m. third Monday of month at township hall. The society is trying to gather history of the village and township and would appreciate hearing from persons who know a bit of Salem's past. President Doris Gillihan's phone number is (Northville) 349-5447

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Saline Area Historical Society--Tuesday, May 18. A car pool is to form at the parking lot across from the Saline Police Station to leave at 7:30 p.m. for the Ypsilanti Historical Museum. The group plans to see the museum's collection and learn how the museum was formed and operates.

A panel from the WCHS Genealogy Section is to speak at the April meeting at 8 p.m. Tuesday, the 20th in the Blue Lounge at Saline High School.

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Ypsilanti Historical Society--General meeting 3-5 p.m. Sunday, May 16, at the Ladies Literary Club, 218 N. Washington St. John Elwell, past president of YHS, will show slides of "The Ypsilanti of Yesterday". Foster Fletcher, Ypsilanti city historian, will provide a running commentary. Old scrapbooks not usually on display will be shown. The meeting is open to the public.

Washtenaw County Historical Society Meeting

Sunday, April 25

1:30 P.M.

GANDY DANCER RESTAURANT
(FORMER MICHIGAN CENTRAL DEPOT)

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